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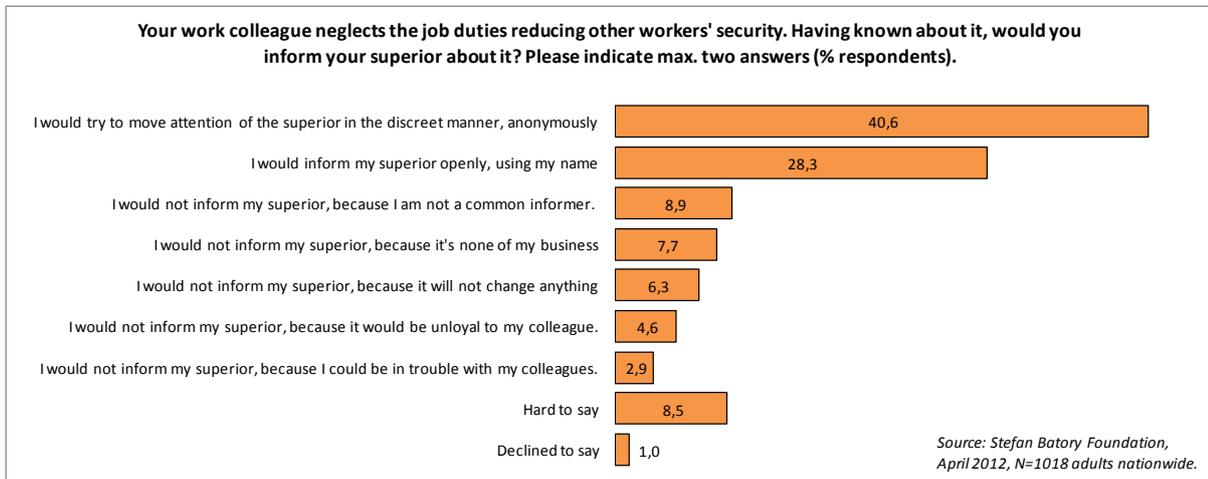


Program Przeciw Korupcji

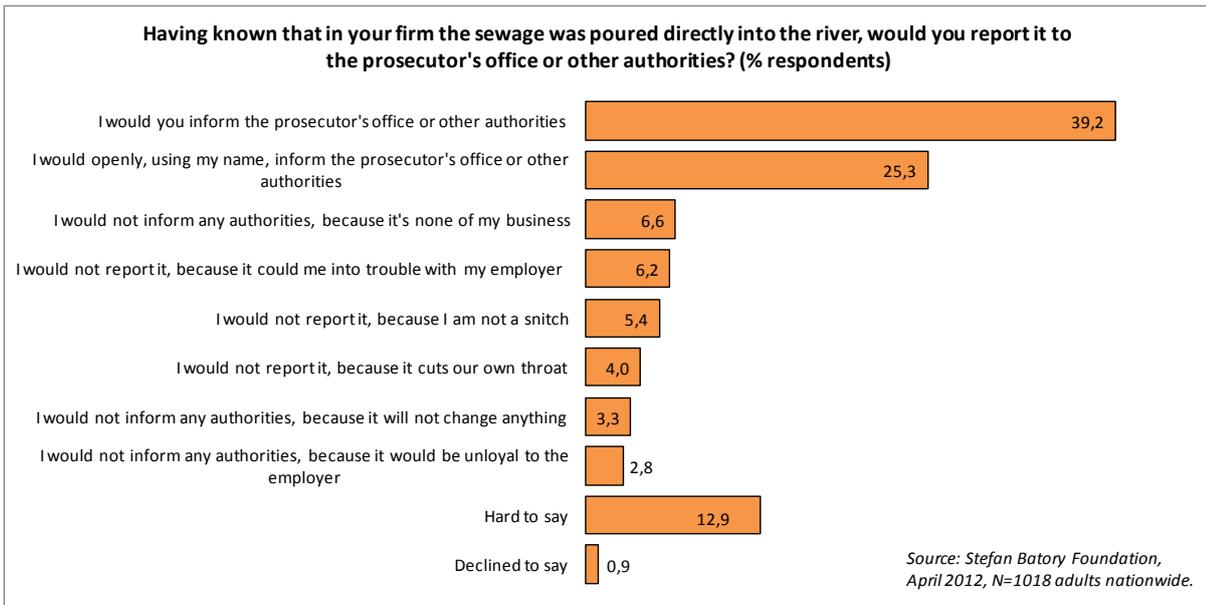
**HEROES OR SNITCHES – WHAT POLES THINK ABOUT PEOPLE WHO REPORT IRREGULARITIES AT WORK?**  
**Public opinion poll**  
**by the Batory Foundation, Poland**  
**April 2012**

**Almost 70% of Poles say they would report any irregularities or situations that endanger the public that they encounter at work, while a significant majority of respondents (77%) would expect a negative response on the part of employers or work colleagues to such action – Stefan Batory Foundation has revealed in an opinion poll on what Poles think about whistle-blowers<sup>1</sup>.**

Most Poles say they would be prepared to report irregularities to their employer (68.9%) or to the relevant authorities (64.5%), but would prefer to do so anonymously than openly, giving their own name. At the same time however 26.1 % of those polled said that they would not report the problem to the management of their firm, and 24.1% said they would not report the problem to authorities outside the firm.



<sup>1</sup> The opinion poll was carried out on 11-18 April 2012 by the CBOS (Polish Public Opinion Poll Center) by way of questions put directly in the form of an interview and recorded on a computer, on a random nationwide sample (18+), N= 1018.



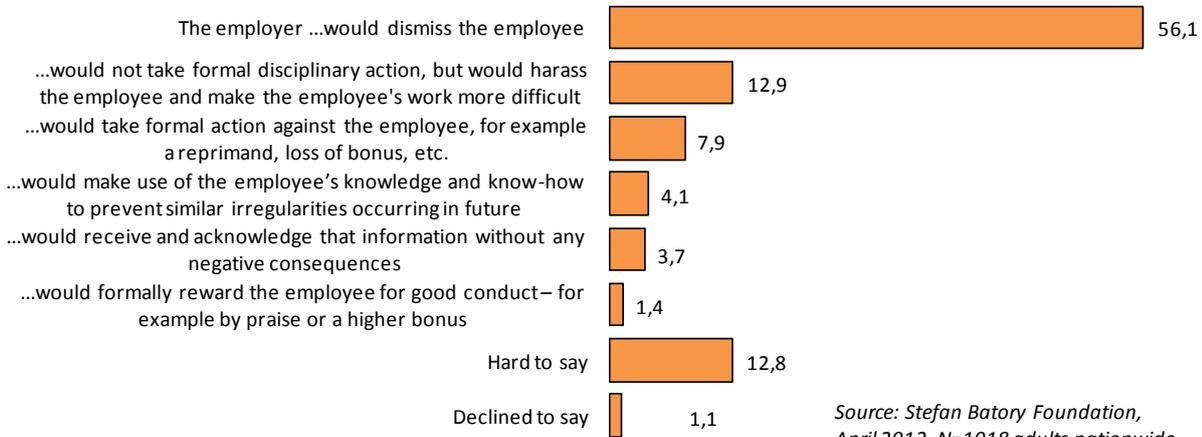
What makes Poles reluctant to report irregularities to their employers? Among those who said that in the scenario described in the question they would not inform a superior, the reasons most frequently given for this course of action were a lack of sense of responsibility for the situation, “dissociation” from the situation (“it’s none of my business”), fear of being branded a snitch (“I would not report it because I’m not a snitch”) and fear of repercussions on the part of the employer (“I would not report it because it could get me into trouble with my employer”).

The majority of those who said that they would report irregularities were people who were self-employed, and management-level staff and skilled personnel who had completed higher education. In both of these groups there is also a higher level of acceptance of whistle-blowing. Those persons however who on the one hand openly declare that they would not inform the firm’s management of irregularities and on the other have a negative opinion of those who do – are predominantly qualified and unqualified laborers. The situation is different when the scenario involves reporting irregularities on the part of the employer as an existing entity (the firm is dumping waste in a river illegally) to the state prosecutor’s office or other authorities. In such a case the percentage of people who said they would report irregularities is higher in both groups.

There are two factors that in practice cause Poles to be considerably less willing to report irregularities either to their employer itself or to the relevant authorities: the first is inadequate protection under the law against potential repercussions on the part of the employer – which is a problem identified by nearly 2/3 of respondents, while the second is the fear of being ostracized in the workplace. Poll participants said expressly that they would expect a negative reaction on the part of the employer: dismissal, harassment, or formal disciplinary action towards the whistle-blower. Only 4.1% of all respondents said that they would expect a positive reaction in the form of use of the knowledge and know-how of the employee, and similarly only a small number of persons said their boss would receive and acknowledge such information without negative implications. Only one in a hundred persons said they thought that the management of the firm would react by formally rewarding the whistle-blower.

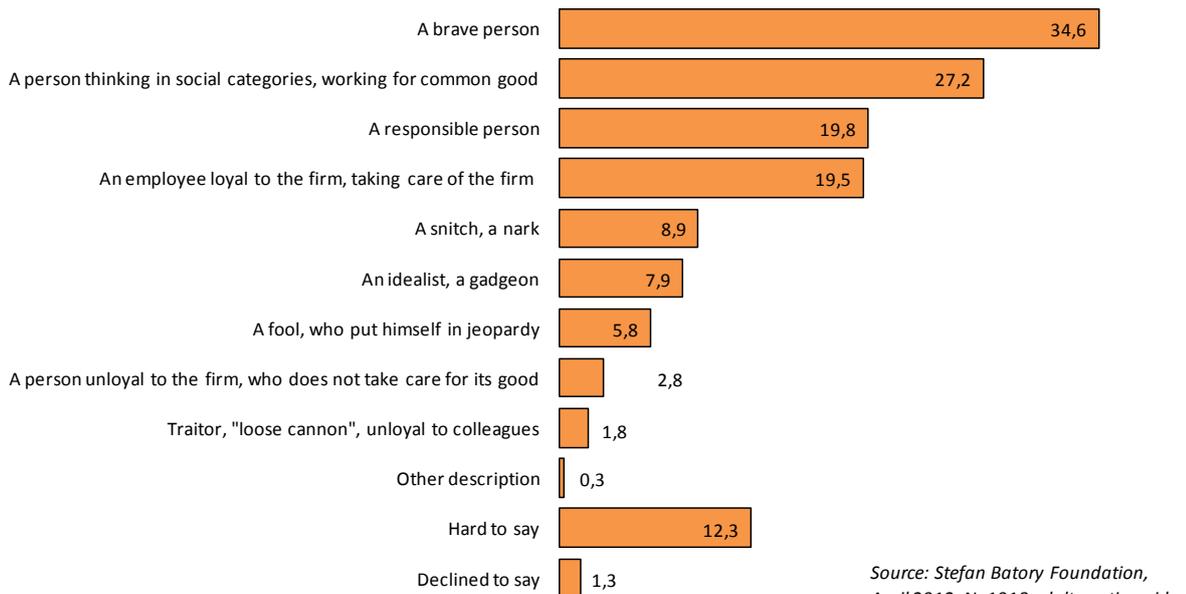
**In your opinion what action would an employer be likely to take towards an employee who reported irregularities in a firm to the relevant authorities?**

(% respondent)



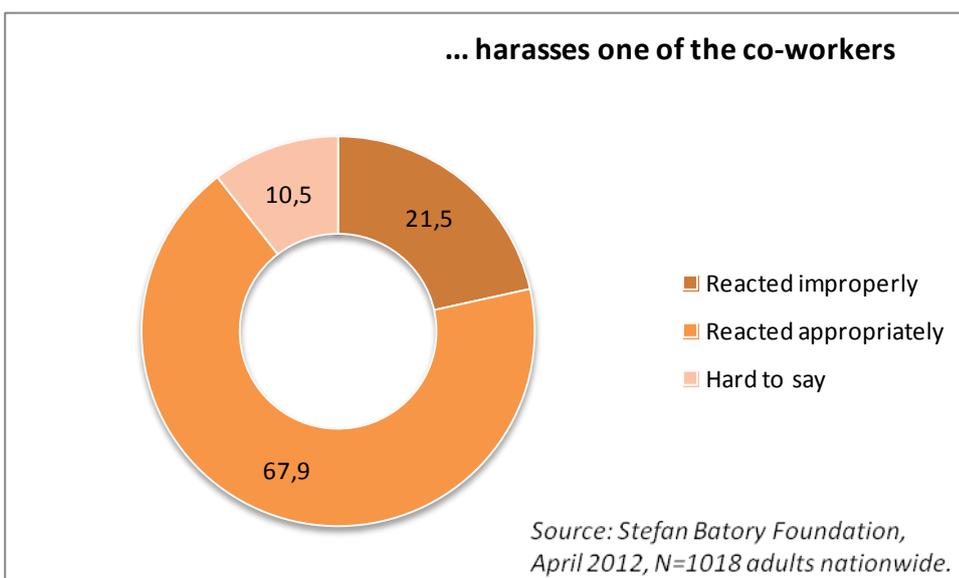
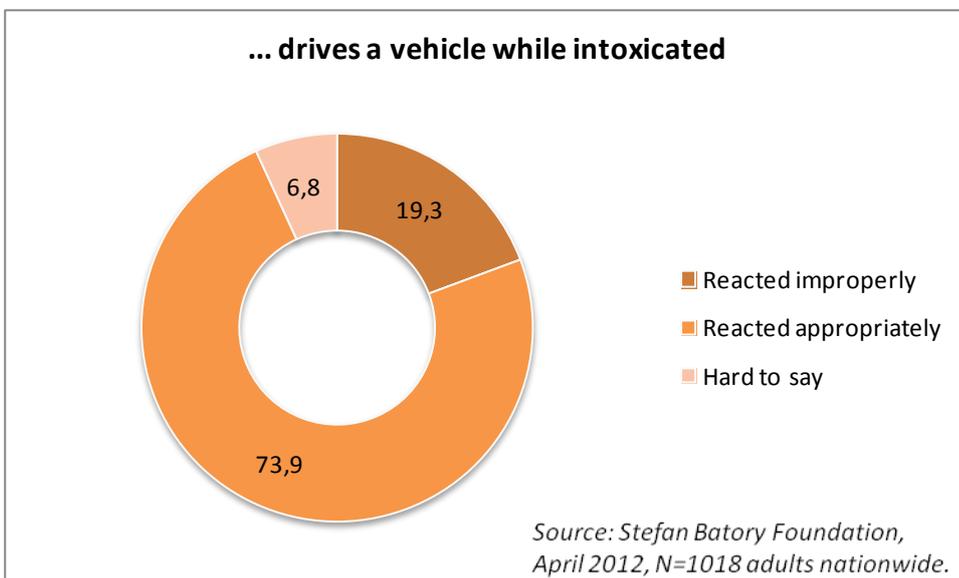
Social stigma related to whistle-blowing is also a barrier that discourages people from reporting irregularities. A whistle-blower informing the management of irregularities that are detrimental to the employer (that a work colleague is using petrol paid for by the firm in a private car), could probably not expect that most work colleagues would approve of such action – the persons who would express support for a whistle-blower to a lesser or greater extent openly in such a situation would be a significant minority. That person would have to expect however an unpleasant reaction on the part of colleagues, at least the keeping of that person at a distance, through deliberate, trivial unpleasanties, to isolation from the rest of his/her colleagues.

**What would you call a worker, who has informed the prosecutor's office or other authorities about the irregularities occurring in his/her work place? (% respondents)**

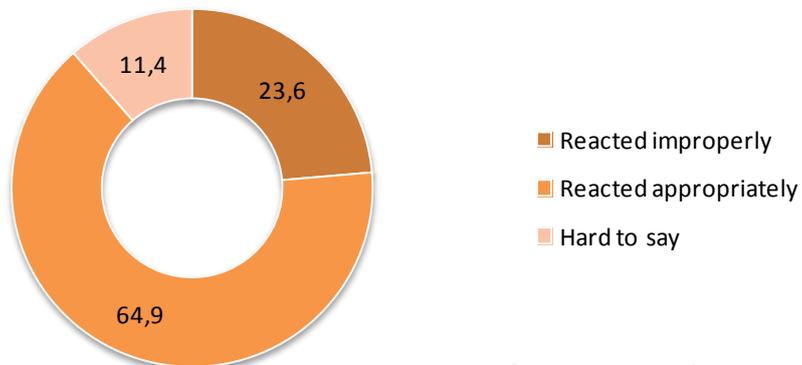


Acceptance of whistle-blowers depends to a significant extent on the circumstances – this is determined in particular by the nature of the reported irregularity. The greatest acceptance of whistle-blowing is found in cases in which there is a generally recognized danger to people: physical danger (non-compliance with safety procedures, driving a vehicle while intoxicated) or mobbing. Approximately 2/3 of people polled approve of actions of this kind. The level of social acceptance of reporting of corruption is equally high. In the context in question cases which can be defined as “acting for one’s own benefit”– putting petrol in a private vehicle at the firm’s expense or making use of unjustified doctor’s certificates to go on sick leave - are less clearly defined. A considerable number of Poles – more than 30% - consider loyalty towards work colleagues to be more important than loyalty towards the employer: more than one in three respondents consider it improper to inform an employer that a work colleague was working for a competitor.

The above mentioned trends are reflected in answers to the following question: **Suppose your work colleague, Mr.X, reported to your superior that Mr. Y [...]. How would you evaluate Mr Y's reaction? (% respondents)**

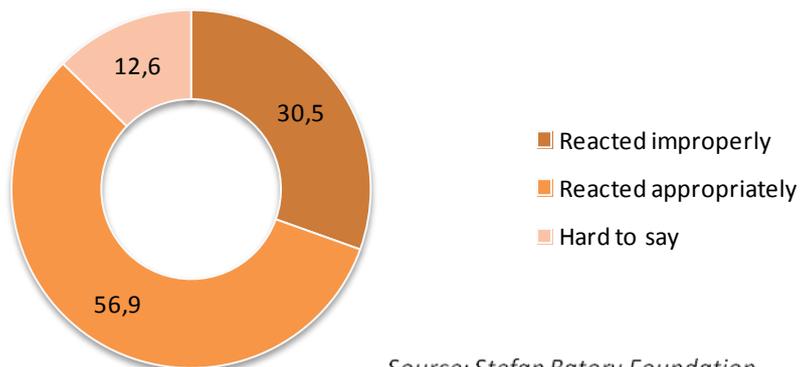


**..., who is working in the supply department, accepts bribes from the suppliers**



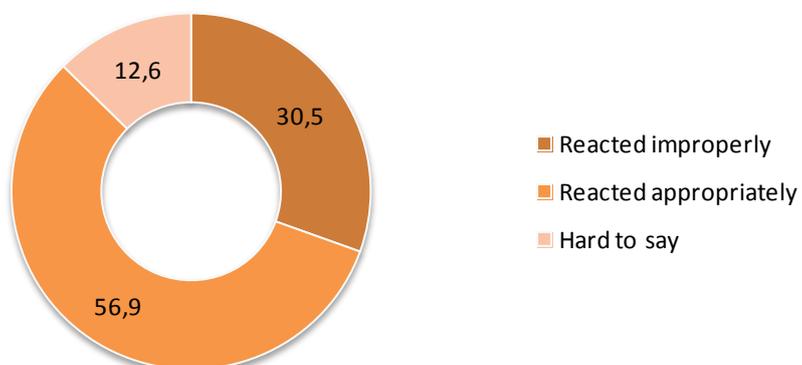
Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

**... neglects the professional duties putting at risk the safety of co-workers**



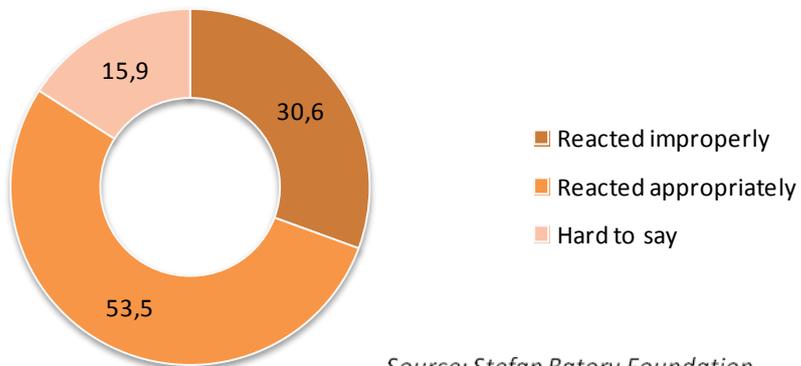
Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

**... puts petrol in a private vehicle at the expense of employer**



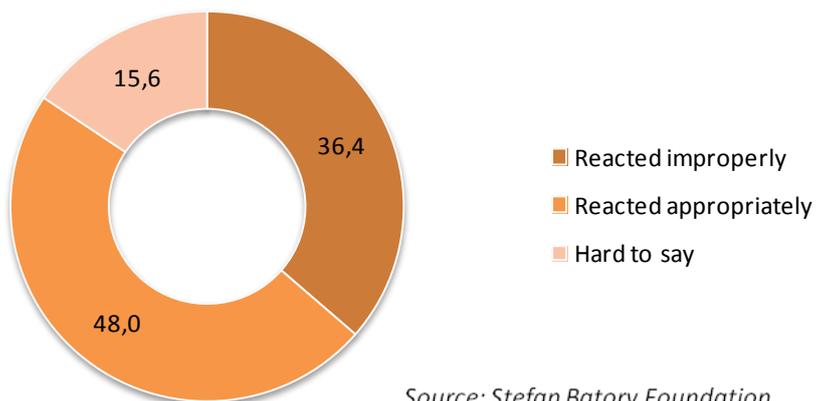
Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

**... uses unjustified doctor's certificates to go on sick leave**



Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

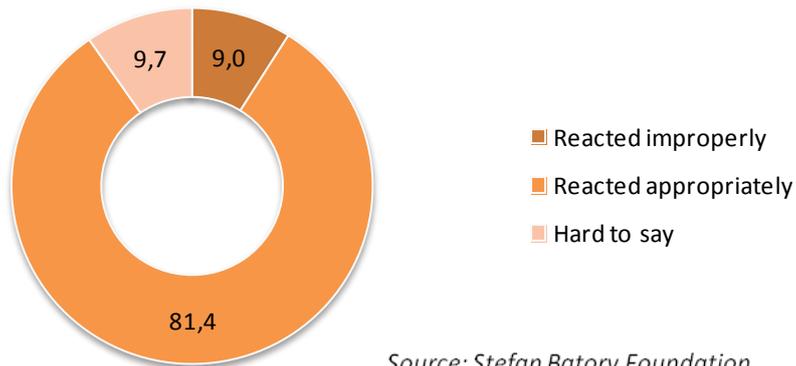
**... collaborates with your employer's competitor**



Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

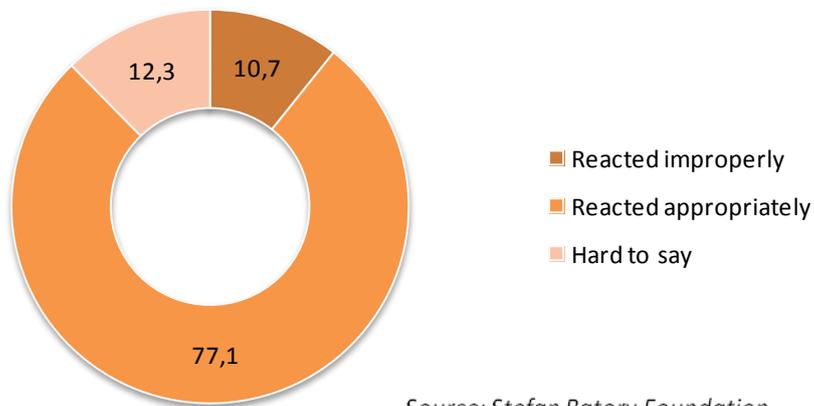
Generally speaking the acceptance of whistleblowing seems to be higher when it refers to irregularities which can be attributed to the company or its management compared to irregularities attributed to co-workers. This trend is shown in answers to the following question: **Suppose your work colleague, Mr. X, informed the prosecutor's office or other authorities that in your firm [...] How would you evaluate Mr. X's reaction? (% respondents)**

**... safety procedures are not complied with resulting in the threat to life or health of workers**



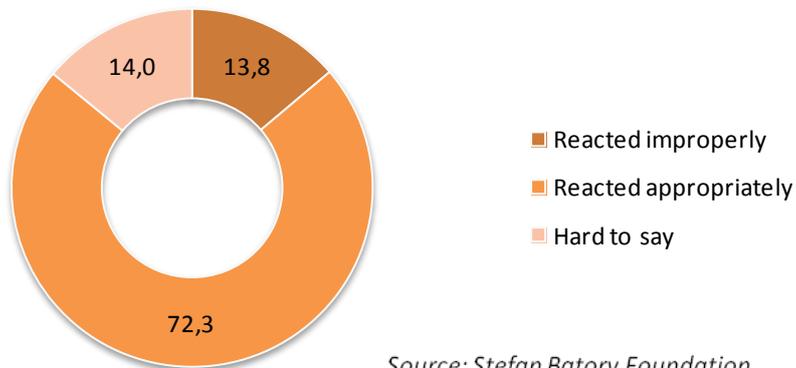
Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

**... the pollution is illegally put directly into the river**



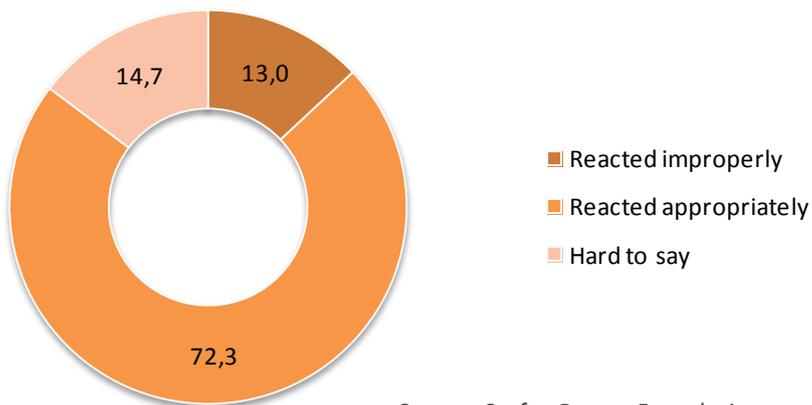
Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

**... the president or members of the management board accept bribes**



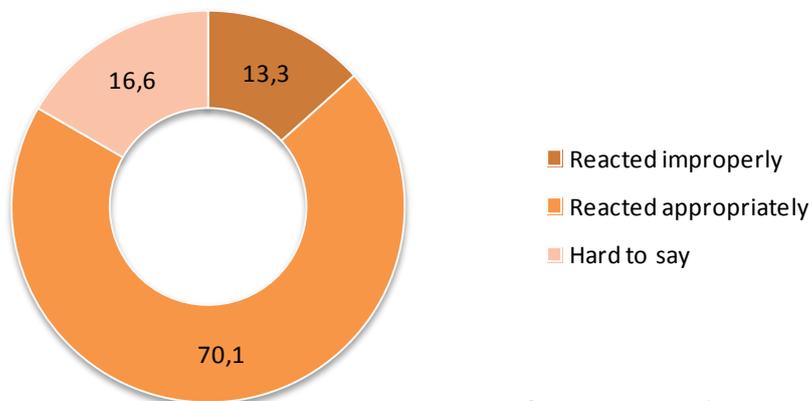
Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

**... financial or accounting fraud took place**



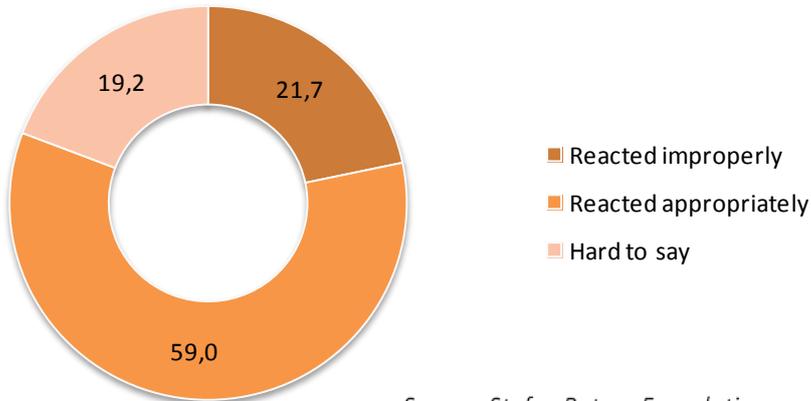
Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

**...the bid rigging takes place**



Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

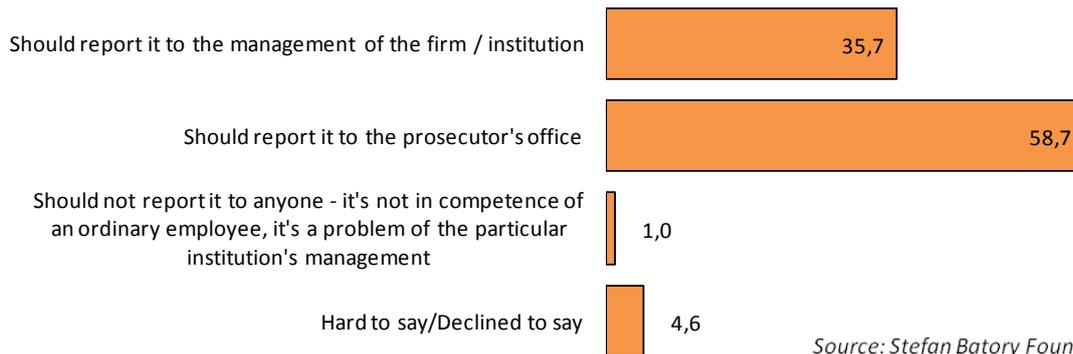
**... people are hired illegally**



Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

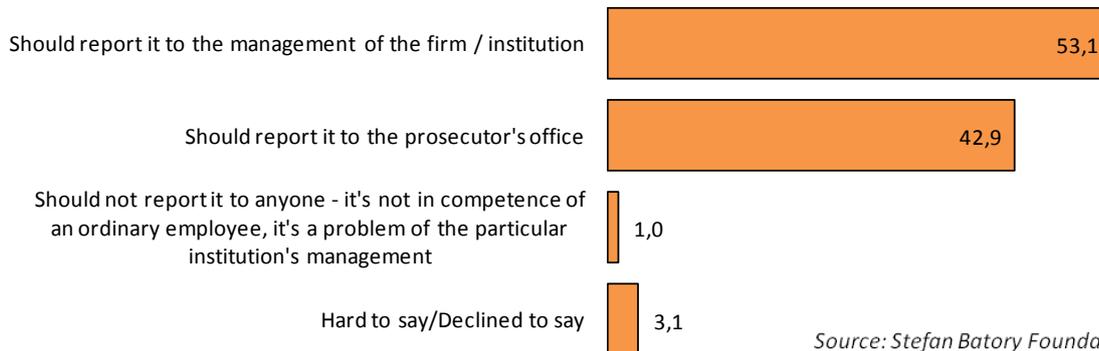
The opinion poll participants stated clearly that they expected persons working in professions such as the medical profession, teachers, clerks working in public administration and police who became aware of such a case to take action to report the irregularity. Though, they are rather in favor of reporting the irregularities within their professional group (80-90% of respondents) rather than seeking the intervention of outside authorities. This even applies to cases in which offences are evidently committed such as sexual abuse of schoolchildren or corruption in the police force, except in cases in which there is danger to life or health of employees (falsifying readings of the concentration of gases in a mine). In such a case almost 60% of poll participants would expect this to be reported to the state prosecutor's office.

**In your opinion what should be the reaction of a miner, who knows that the management forges the measures of the explosive gas concentration in the mine? (% respondents)**



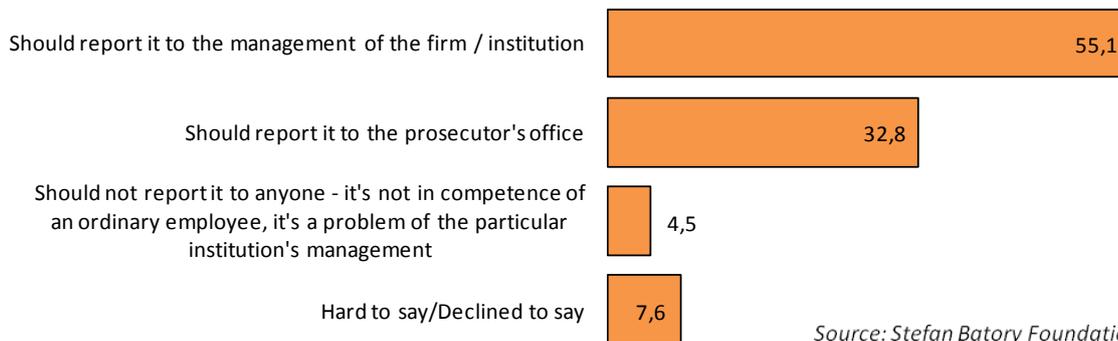
Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

**In your opinion what should be the reaction of a teacher who knows that another teacher at school is harassing students? (% respondents)**



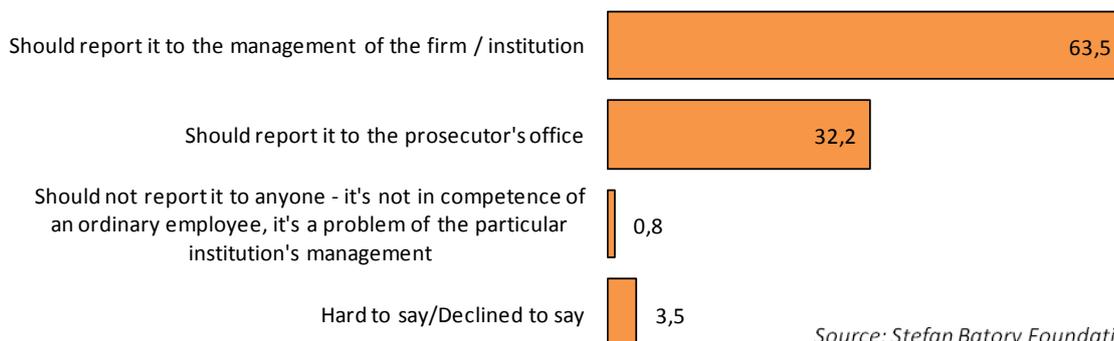
Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

**In your opinion what should be the reaction of a policeman who knows that two other policemen at the police station accept bribes? (% respondent)**



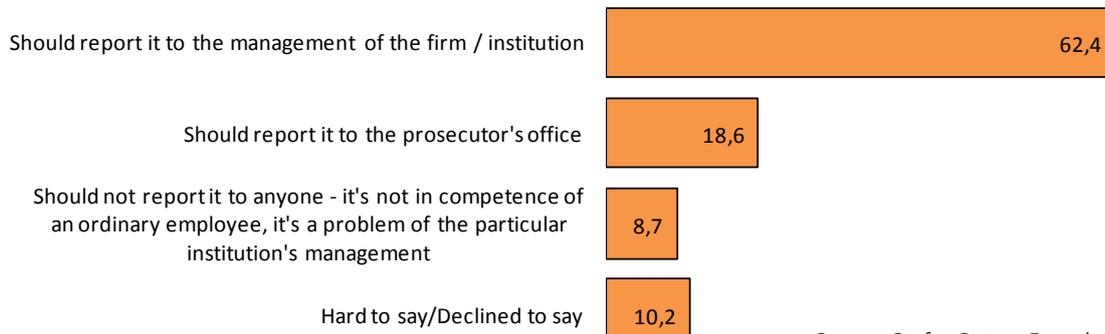
Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

**In your opinion what should be the reaction of an employee of the nursing home who knows that the personnel mistreats the clients? (% respondent)**



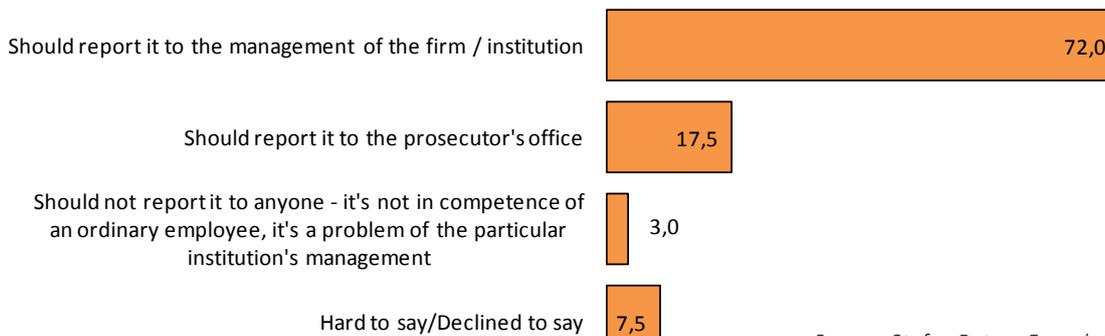
Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

**In your opinion what should be the reaction of an employee of the tax office who knows that another employee accepts invitations to expensive restaurants from tax-payers? (% respondents)**



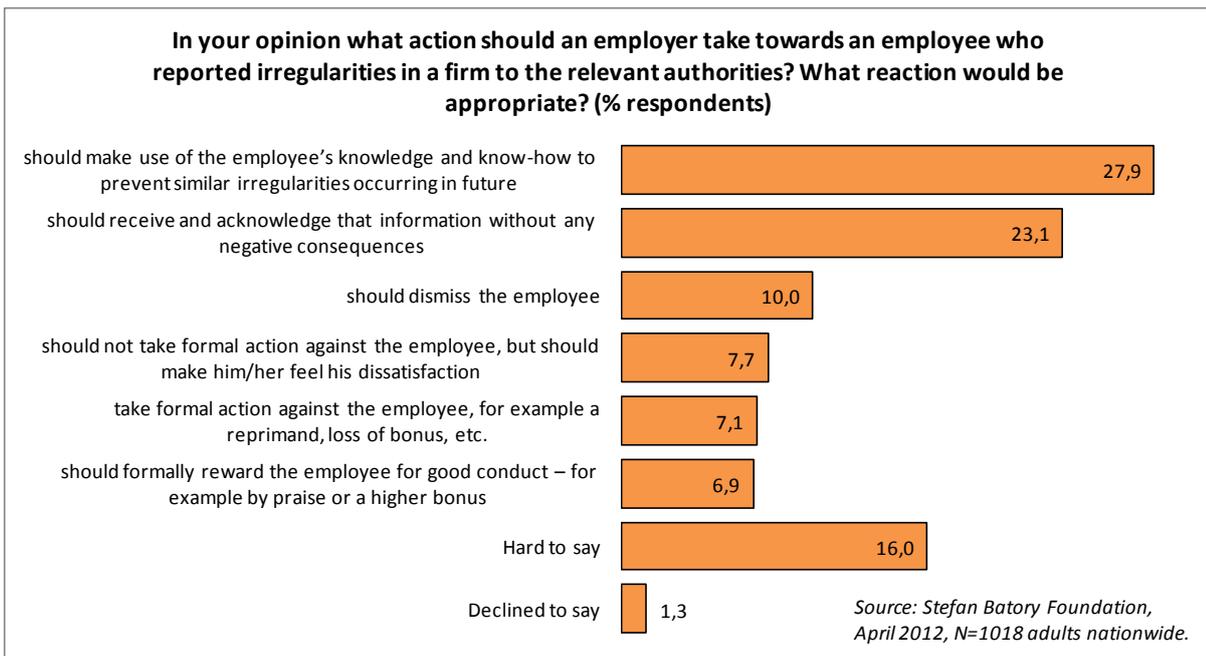
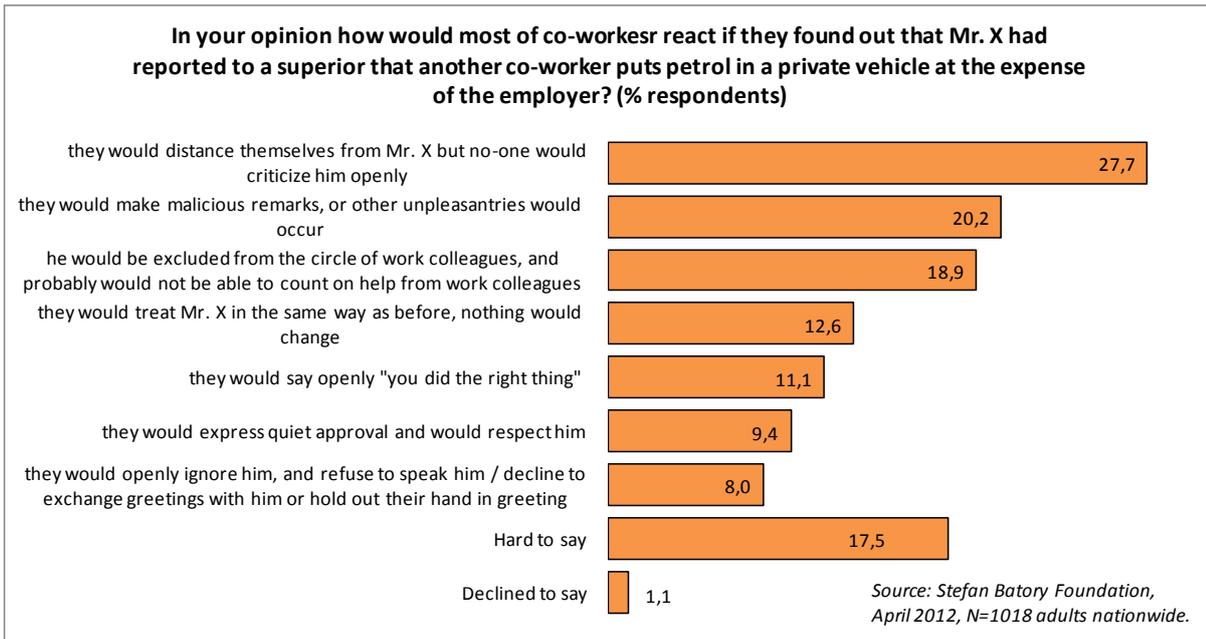
Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

**In your opinion what should be the reaction of a physician who knows that another doctor in a hospital is known from the malpractice? (% respondents)**

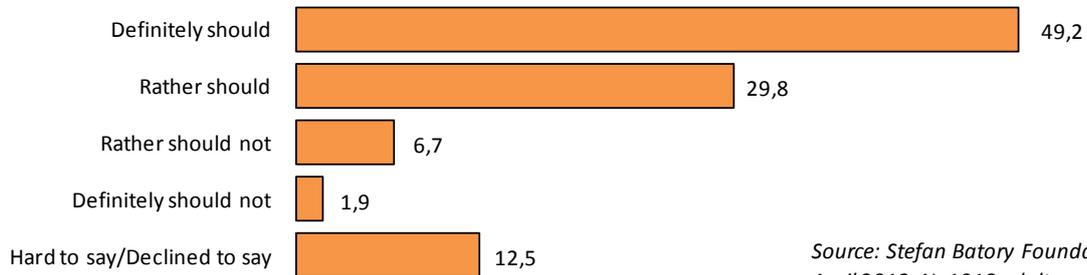


Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

Responses to the other questions are presented below:



**In your opinion an employee who reported irregularities in a firm (harmful for employer' or social interest) to the relevant authorities - should he/she be legally protected from a dismissal, discrimination or other revenge actions of the employer? (% res**



Source: Stefan Batory Foundation, April 2012, N=1018 adults nationwide.

**In your opinion is an employee reporting about irregularities in a firm (harmful for employer' or social interest) legally protected against a dismissal, discrimination or other revenge actions of the employer? (% respondents)**

